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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CE JAMIE MOORE AND PM. PLEASE PASS TO
JEFF HOVENIER AT THE NSC

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NATO](#) [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [AF](#) [HU](#)
SUBJECT: HUNGARY IN AFGHANISTAN - PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Classified By: Political Officer Jon Martinson, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. In a November 9 meeting with the Charge, senior MOD and MFA officers provided an in-depth review of current and future Hungarian operations in Afghanistan. In Hungary's first combat operations since the 1956 revolution, the group underscored Hungary's "unchanged commitment...but one with human and financial resources constraints." Led by an inter-ministerial "steering board" Hungary has a USD 2.5 million development program for its Provincial reconstruction Team (PRT) in Baghlan Province, supplemented by grants from the EU, Greece, and Japan. Our contacts highlighted a deteriorating security situation in Baghlan and shared Gen. McCrystal's analysis that progress in the coming 12 months is critical to mission success. They also noted a lack of information about USG economic development activities in their province and a need to improve communication/coordination with neighboring provinces/PRTs. A recent offer to post USG personnel in Baghlan (septel) could address both of these concerns. In its military effort, Hungary will increase its total number of deployed personnel in 2010 with a small MI-35 helicopter training unit and a contingent of military engineers. However, deployment of a second Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) planned for 2010 is pushed back to 2011. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Charge, accompanied by the Chief, Office of Defense Cooperation and PolOff, met November 9 with the MOD Policy State Secretary Jozsef Bali, MFA Security and Non-proliferation Department Head, Peter Sztaray, and MFA Director General for International Development, Denes Tomaj, to review current and planned Hungarian activities in Afghanistan.

UNCHANGED COMMITMENT

¶3. (C) Bali, commenting that this is the first time Hungarian forces have been involved in combat operations since the 1956 revolution, underscored strong cross-party political support for Hungarian operations in Afghanistan. He also noted the current high level of public support, which he attributes to the efforts of Minister of Defense Imre Szekeres. Stating "our commitment is unchanged, but we do have human and financial resource constraints," Bali suggested that Hungary needs to advocate more as to what NATO and partners are doing in Afghanistan, not just Hungary, in order to strengthen the message to its public that Hungary is not alone.

DEVELOPMENT FOCUS ON JOB CREATION

¶4. (C) Responding to the Charge's question concerning development activity, Denes Tomaj outlined Hungarian planning efforts consisting of a "steering board," co-chaired by the MOD and MFA to provide guidance on Hungarian planning for Afghanistan. Beginning in 2007, the GOH allocated 500 million HUF (USD 2.5 million) for development projects. The GOH's 2008-09 development plan focuses primarily on agriculture and rural development, education and health, and support to law enforcement training for the Afghan National Police (ANP). Tomaj explained that the GOH works directly with three to four Interfaith and Baptist Aid NGO representatives stationed at the PRT, in addition to two MFA civilians, to coordinate and oversee projects. The primary goal of all these projects is to create long-term jobs for local Afghans. Although 2009 and 2010 development funds decreased to 460 million HUF (USD 2.3 million), Tomaj said that the GOH has 1,200,000 euros approved or in the pipeline from the EU, and 800,000 euros from Greece for projects in 2008 and 2009. Japan has also committed USD 1,000,000 for projects run by the two Hungarian NGOs.

DETERIORATING SECURITY CLIMATE

¶5. (C) Turning to operations in Baghlan province, Bali said that Hungary currently has 230 personnel in the PRT and about 400 total in Afghanistan; with a one-to-three rotation base, approximately 10 percent of the Hungarian land forces are either preparing to deploy, deployed, or in post-rotation stand down. Focusing on the security situation, Bali said that it is worsening, making it more difficult to get out into province as the Taliban moves from southern Afghanistan to the north. He cited warlords and Pashtuns who support the Taliban as the main threat, highlighting two attacks on the PRT and 10 on the joint Ohio National Guard/Hungarian OMLT in recent months.

¶6. (C) Although calling the joint OMLT working with Afghan National Army's (ANA) Kandak "potentially successful," Bali warned of the Kandak's 33 percent desertion rate, explaining that deserters aren't going home - but going to the enemy side, taking their equipment with them. The MOD, Bali said, will improve its early-warning capability with the upcoming deployment of UAVs procured from Israel. Bali also said that the addition of a 29-person Montenegrin contingent in early 2010 will improve the PRT's quick-response capability, using HDF personnel freed-up by the Montenegrins.

PRT, OMLT AND SOF EXTENSIONS

¶7. (C) The number of Hungarian military in Afghanistan, according to Bali, will increase in 2010 to 450 from the current level of 386. Acknowledging that the current PRT mandate runs through October 2010, he expects the government to extend both OMLT and PRT mandates into 2011. Responding to a question concerning the current SOF deployment's mandate, which expires in February 2010, Bali said that there already is an internal MOD decision to extend the SOF mandate with two four-month deployments that would keep the group in Afghanistan until October 2010. However, there will not be a public announcement until late December.

¶8. (C) Bali also stated that the current economic downturn will delay the deployment of a second OMLT from 2010 until 2011. However, he said that the MOD is committed to sending two pilots and eight support personnel under the Czech umbrella to train MI-35 pilots in Kabul, and will also send a small number of trainers to the Afghan military engineering school in Region North. While understanding the need for approximately 200 police training OMLTs in the future, Bali said that Hungary would not be able to currently assist with this ANP training effort, as the Hungarian Constitution, which prohibits civilian police deployments into combat

situations, would need to be changed.

¶9. (C) Commenting on efforts to increase the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) to 400,000, Bali, somewhat ironically, said that "we are attempting to train those ANSF personnel who, for several generations, have experience in irregular warfare on this very terrain - and now we are coming to teach them how to fight the Taliban." Continuing, Bali raised the disconnect between NATO priorities and EU priorities when it comes to Afghanistan. He noted that some EU countries provide 10 times more aid to Africa than they do to Afghanistan - even those countries with a significant number on the ground in Afghanistan - adding "this is a mistake."

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION SHORTFALLS

¶10. (C) Closing out the discussion, Bali provided several personal comments on a range of issues. Bali views the quality of Afghan governance as a key to success, commenting that "if we support a corrupt government then the PRT is not viewed as credible." He said that he agrees with General McChrystal's assessment that we have one year to get things right - the short term issues are the key, arguing for short-term successes. Asked about coordination with other entities on the ground in Baghlan, Bali said that the Hungarian PRT has no real idea as to what USAID is doing in the province, asking for greater communication . . . and resources. He argued that the wealth of the country running the PRT should not dictate the level of development activities. He also noted the lack of communication and coordination with PRTs in adjacent provinces.

POTENTIAL U.S. ASSISTANCE

¶11. (C) Responding to a request for suggestions as to how the U.S. might assist in improving the effectiveness of national efforts in Afghanistan, Denes Tomaj proposed that, in those regions and PRTs where the U.S. is not the lead nation, it would help if the U.S. could provide some level of financial assistance to those lower-budgeted PRTs to help in development efforts. Tomaj views provincial-level development as the key to success, commenting that "any slight improvement at the local level is a major improvement at the national level." Additionally, Secretary Bali told PolOff November 19 that the MOD is reviewing a draft U.S. Embassy Kabul proposal to imbed U.S. development personnel in the Hungarian PRT (septel). This timely proposal could be an effective means of addressing several Hungarian concerns.
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